

Chicago's War on Education

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

Region: [USA](#)

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On September 10, Chicago teachers walked out. By the time this article circulates, they may be back in classrooms. Since last November, they've been fighting stiff headwinds for justice. Mayor Rahm Emanuel wants them marginalized and denied vital rights. Their own union bosses sold them out. They're on their own. They're mad. Some wear buttons showing a line drawn through Emanuel's face. Others carry signs saying "What's Rahm With You." Many know his "Rahmbo" nickname.

Longtime Chicago political strategist Don Rose said polls show he's on the wrong side of this issue. What's worse is he made it personal. He's a bully and shows it. His vitriol got angry teachers, parents and students angrier.

At the same time, unless they take matters into their own hands quickly, vital issues will be lost. It's down to the wire with little time left. Perhaps none 24 hours from now or sooner.

On September 17, Emanuel asked a county court to force teachers back in classrooms. He calls a lawful strike illegal. He makes ordinary scoundrels look respectable. He ought to be locked up instead of in City Hall.

Union spokeswoman Stephenie Gadlin called his injunction a "vindictive act." Industrial Relations Professor Gary Chaison said it's a "declaration of war." He doesn't think Emanuel understands that negotiating involves reaching agreement, not winning.

For his part, Emanuel is unapologetic. He's defiant and belligerent. He wants things his way. He believes he's boss, and what he says goes. His governing style is despotic. He likely wouldn't have been elected without process rigging on his behalf.

He reminds some of Mayor Richard J. Daley. He was boss for 20 years and let people know it.

Emanuel menaces most Chicagoans. He's the city's worst ever mayor. He governs by diktat authority. He serves privileged interests only. Ordinary people don't count. Worker exploitation is policy. Teachers are being hung out to dry. Kids are being denied futures.

It's happening across America from coast to coast. It's official federal, state, and local policy. Obama's in the forefront leading it. He's beholden to Wall Street, war profiteers, and other corporate favorites.

America the beautiful never was and isn't now. It's been third-worldized. Police state laws target non-believers. Ordinary people have no rights.

Emanuel's spokeswoman, Sarah Hamilton, said city attorneys asked Cook County Circuit Court Judge Peter Flynn to order strike action end. They want a moral and legal right denied.

Arguments on both sides will be heard Wednesday, or will they? Union bosses are bullying teachers to back off and resume working. A Tuesday vote is scheduled. Will they hang tough or surrender? It's hard to say.

Emanuel's injunction makes fraudulent claims. He said a lawful strike is illegal. He outrageously called it a "clear and present danger to public health and safety." It "prohibits students from receiving critical educational and social services."

He'll say anything no matter how untrue. Right-wing courts generally concur. Teachers, parents and kids are assaulted by city officials, corrupt union bosses, and media scoundrels supporting wealth and power over popular interests.

City attorney Stephen Patton said if strike action isn't ended late Tuesday or early Wednesday, we'll "go to Plan B and be heard on what we think are strong legal grounds to enjoin the strike and at least get kids back in school on Thursday morning, we hope."

The [Chicago Sun Times](#) asked "What's next in teachers strike?" It gave answers in Q & A format. In the next 24 hours, strike action could end or continue.

Union bosses accepted a deal they should have rejected. House of Delegates members lacked complete information. They balked for good reason. On Tuesday afternoon, they'll meet again. At that time, they'll vote a second time on whether to end strike action or continue it.

If they still say no deal, Judge Flynn gets his say. On November 6, he's seeking retention. Labor law Professor Martin Malin said teachers never were enjoined under the statute Emanuel invoked.

City labor law attorney L. Steven Platt said:

"You tell me what chancery judge is going to issue an injunction against the teachers union. Believe me, the unions have long memories. Every union is going to remember this judge...come election time."

Some experts believe Flynn may try settling matters in chambers without taking sides. If teachers resume working, it's a mute point. If not, city attorneys will have to prove this issue belongs in court, not the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board.

Strike action is over unfair labor practices. Union officials complained to the labor board. It claimed it alone is authorized to stop strike action. On Tuesday, it's preliminary ruling is expected.

According to Malin, the union has a strong case. The labor board should have first say on whether court action is warranted. In 2011, the union disputed the district's right to offer individual school incentives.

At issue was early implementation of extending the school year. The district didn't dispute the labor board's jurisdiction. Why do it now when not then?

If House of Delegates members vote to keep striking and Flynn rules against them, they have two choices. They can defy him and stay out or appeal, end picketing, and resume classes.

All teachers have final say. It doesn't matter. Up to two weeks are needed to complete thousands of votes and count them. Once strike action ends and classes resume, the train left the station. It'll be too late to stop it.

At the same time, don't expect union head Karen Lewis to support worker rights after spurning them. Last Friday, she practically admitted caving to city officials. She said "this is the deal we got." She also expressed comfort with its terms. Now she calls it a raw deal. She couldn't be trusted in negotiations and can't now.

In Chicago and across America, a tsunami of anti-labor editorials expressed one-sided views. It's no surprise. Corporate media bosses march in lockstep with harmful policy initiatives.

They're disdainful of public education. They want parents denied the best for their children. They want kids deprived of futures. They want profits prioritized. They want privilege alone generously rewarded.

Washington Post bosses are hostile to worker rights. They editorialized several times. Their [latest](#) headlined "Chicago's striking teachers' narrow interests," saying:

They and union officials are in it for all they can get. It's all about getting more. "(S)o what if the interests of tens of thousands of children are hurt in the process?"

Emanuel "was properly outraged....Chicago teachers (are) among the nation's highest paid. (They) ought to appreciate the city's offer."

Emanuel, corrupt officials around him, union bosses supporting them, and corporate profiteers couldn't say it better. Who cares about teachers, parents and kids when only profits and hardline bossism matters.

A [Chicago Tribune](#) opinion piece headlined "Classrooms or chaos," saying:

All eyes are on House of Delegates members. They'll vote Tuesday. "Refusing to go back to work would be a disastrous escalation of this labor fight."

School board officials "offered teachers substantial raises and protections....Contract language....helps Chicago keep pace with education reform....(K)ids and their parents are waiting. Patience is thin. The teachers should be in the classroom."

Terms show they've been cheated. Education is being downsized. Profiteers are getting control. Kids don't have a chance when bottom line priorities matter more than preparing them for futures.

Back-to-back Chicago Sun Times editorials expressed disdain the same way. One came out Monday. The [latest](#) headlined "Read the fine print, then end strike," saying:

"Not only did Chicago teachers get a fair deal, the contract is the very best they are going to get. (The) deal represents the outer limits of what the Chicago Board of Education can do, both on salary and on policy."

The editorial claims Emanuel showed flexibility. Lewis "fought for her members and her vision for better schools." Teacher views were respected. Agreement terms were fair and balanced. "Teachers, take a day if you must. Then grab this deal while you still have it."

Seven previous articles explained core issues. Union bosses caved on teacher rights. Parents and kids are being hung out to dry, and policy initiatives plunge a dagger into public education's heart.

Emanuel showed flexibility? Lewis fought for teacher rights? Fair and balanced deal? Grab it while you can? Facts prove otherwise. Teachers need to understand what's going on, hold firm, stay and course, and fight. They won't get another chance near-term.

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